



LARRY HOGAN  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

July 25, 2022

The Honorable Clarence C. Crawford  
Maryland State Board of Education  
200 W. Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear President Crawford,

Providing a world class education for every Maryland student, regardless of the zip code they happen to grow up in, has been and always will be my top priority. Since taking office, our administration has provided record funding, totaling \$55 billion, which represents an increase of more than 31%. Maryland has some of the best and most highly-funded schools in the nation, and we have continuously worked hard to make them even better. With these substantial increases in financial investment, it is crucial we ensure our public schools are accountable to parents, students, teachers, and taxpayers.

Since the earliest days of our administration I have led the fight for more accountability in our local school systems and pushed to raise academic standards while rooting out corruption and mismanagement. Amid a number of well-documented ethical lapses in multiple local school systems - including criminal convictions, grade-fixing scandals, and procurement improprieties - I introduced legislation and successfully enacted the first Inspector General for Education in state history. The creation of this position reaffirmed my commitment to provide more accountability for parents and better results for our children.

The Office of the Inspector General for Education, which allows Maryland citizens to report potential cases of wrongdoing, abuse, and unethical conduct, has already proven successful at creating a more fair and transparent education system. On June 7, 2022, the Inspector General for Education, Richard Henry, released an investigative report into allegations of grade changing practices within the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) that brought to light a pattern of unconscionable behavior by adults in positions of authority in an apparent effort to paper over academic deficiencies at the expense of some of our most vulnerable students.

The Inspector General conducted interviews with former and current teachers, administrative staff members, managers, and conducted an exhaustive review of student data, records, and grade change forms. The resulting report confirmed the existence of a massive grade-fixing scheme in Baltimore City Public Schools, documenting thousands of instances of wrongdoing and systemic problems. The report revealed a staggering level of disregard for the integrity of the educational system and a clear lack of accountability at the highest levels.

On June 9, 2022 I referred the investigative report to the United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, Erik Barron, to further investigate the matters revealed, and where appropriate bring federal criminal charges against any persons who have perpetrated fraud, waste, and abuse. On July 13, 2022 United States Attorney Barron responded that, "Federal funds must be well-spent and reported on truthfully and I appreciate you bringing this matter to my attention. Be assured that I will review the report carefully and take whatever action is deemed appropriate."

The Inspector General's recommendation in the report is that pursuant to Maryland Code, Education Article 5-110, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners request the Maryland State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Schools issue an emergency procurement for an independent performance audit of BCPS to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of selected functional areas related to the governance and administration of grading policies and procedures.

While I am pleased BCPS reportedly welcomes the opportunity to contract with an external entity to ensure they maintain improvement, BCPS has asserted that they would like to focus this additional layer of review on grading practices during the 2022-2023 school year alone, disregarding the years investigated in the report. On July 8, 2022 the Inspector General sent clarifying correspondence to you stating an emergency procurement for an independent performance audit of BCPS should be approved to include the school years 2016 through 2022.

It's critical that an external entity review the allegations in the Inspector General's report and that the evaluation be conducted for all of the school years at issue to provide an accurate representation of the scope of the grade-changing operation. For these reasons, I am hereby requesting that the State Board of Education take immediate steps to begin a complete, thorough, and exhaustive investigation into these allegations, beginning with the issuance of the emergency procurement recommended in the Inspector General's report.

This follows similar actions I took in 2017 when I called on the State Board of Education to conduct an investigation into allegations of widespread systemic fraud and corruption in the Prince George's County Public School System, which successfully uncovered substantial irregularities in grading and graduation certification, allowing the school system to take remedial action. In order to root out corruption and damaging practices that jeopardize our children's futures, we must demand full transparency and swift corrective action wherever instances of wrongdoing are uncovered.

Marylanders are demanding better outcomes and more accountability for the taxpayer dollars entrusted to the local school systems charged with providing a high-quality education for every single Maryland child—with no exceptions. Now more than ever, we must work together to provide the accountability, integrity, and efficiency in our public education system that Maryland families expect and deserve.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Larry Hogan", is written over a horizontal line.

Larry Hogan  
Governor

cc:

State Superintendent of Schools, Mohammed Choudhury  
Inspector General for Education, Richard Henry